

“The Sorcerer’s Bride”

Quebec City was founded by Samuel de Champlain in 1608. Le Grand Siège de La Rochelle in 1627-1628 marked the apex of the tensions between the Catholics and the Protestants in France, and ended with a complete victory for King Louis XIII and the Catholics. Ville-Marie, which later became Montreal, was founded in 1649.

Québec was a vast country stretching from the shores of the St-Lawrence and Acadia to those of Mississippi: The French population was around 2200 souls – divided into three main centers for a distance of about 240 km. The region of Québec and the seigneuries of Beauport, Beaupré, Notre-Dame-des-Anges and Lauzon, had nearly 1200 inhabitants and a few hundred settlers were established in Trois-Rivières and the seigneuries of Cap-de-la-Madeleine, Sainte-Anne de Champlain and the outpost on l’Île de Montréal. Acadia had more than 500 inhabitants. The faithful were served by missionaries, but there were only three churches with a priest: Quebec City and Ville-Marie and Beaupré.

At least one blasphemy prosecution has come to light: The only wizard ever found in the colony, was the immigrant Daniel Vuil, a Huguenot, executed for the crime of sorcery under the French Regime.

‘T was on a voyage from Dieppe’s squalid seaport –
Away from sordid city and crowded streets – away from France
Three ships set forth with rich and poor aboard...
La Sacrifice d’Abraham, the Prince Guillaume and St-André...
The fleet’s destination was Montréal, Kébec.
Unfurled sails and journey began: ‘T was 14 March 1659:
‘T would be ninety-six days before they reached the land.

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Captain Isaïe Guyesmeux sailed *La Sacrifice d’Abraham*:
His boat weighed in at 300 tons, and carried
Important men – Grand Master of waters and forests in Nouvelle France,
Sieur Charles de Lauzon Charney... to new world travelling,
With him was Bishop Henri de Bernières, vicar apostolic
Of all Nouvelle France – and all must knee bend to him;
François-Xavier de Laval Montmorency, Jesuit Bishop,
Was aboard, too – *he was coming from La Rochelle*;
Onboard, as well, was Brother Hierosme (Jerome) Lallement;
Two priests were travelling with him: Philip Pilgrim
And Jean Torcapel – *and he would be the first pastor of Kébec*.
And the ship’s niggers cast the shit pails daily o’erboard.

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With hard men – soldiers and sailors and convicts – engagés
Indentured slaves bound to work the new land for three years without pay,

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Young maidens bound for marriage under deck were stored.
Child-brides who paved the way for *la fille marier et la fille du roi*;
Crammed in its hold – “nigh” 130 poor souls:
Frenchmen and some women – most these just girls in their adolescence ... 25
Soft lapping sea e'er gently rocking the boat...
Frightening sounds of groaning boards holding back salt water would not cease...
Though the sad cries of the sick and dying might quiet...
For the trembling human cargo held in the dank below the deck
Long days and nights of waves they must now endure; 30
And, for the people crammed underfoot, sharing the stifling dark,
E'ery soul was buried alive in that wooden grave –
The journey had just begun and walls were not yet closing on them...

And Daniel Vuil sold his soul to the devil for a Catholic girl:
Her name was Barbe Halay – not yet sixteen years old; 35
But her parents wouldst see her marry a Catholic man in the New World...
To become wife and mother of the new nation;
And Daniel Vuil, a Huguenot (and therefore also heretical);
Also sought a new beginning in that new land –
He was amongst those fleeing unjust persecutions on French soil, 40
And whence his dark-lolling eyes landed 'pon her breast
Thence within his ambitious mind lust for her innocence didst flame
And in his cold, darkening heart he moved closer...
A hypnotic stare drawing nearer her soul to devour her love...
A shadow touching hers within the darkened hold ... 45
A whisper voiced amongst the crowd – and thus, the girl he quick charms:
Words that led the child unknowing away from God
As all good Catholics worshiped Him – away from God into his arms...
Promises were made – she thought her a lucky bride...
But in asking for her hand in marriage – quick refused was that churl; 50
Her parents would not consent to union with a heathen –
For as a protestant he was judged a blasphemer and immoral;
So, cussing, abjured he his Protestant religion
And he swore upon the Holy Bible to be an honest Catholic...
Well spoke he polished words – lies which he invented... 55
He abjured faith in his Protestant religion with words diabolic
To hear – honeyed pleas ignored by all but the girl.
Still, the liar would have said and done anything to have his prize
And his mouth spake heresies from his heart and tongue...
In selfish thoughts, “At last,” he, silent swore “I will have the young dove.” 60

At last, *La Sacrifice d'Abraham* landed 'pon the foreign shore,
Ninety-two days after departure from Dieppe.
On June 16th – at six o'clock in the evening ship dropped anchor:
Thus they finally arrived at Beauport, Kébec.
Gladly every soul was quick to quit the floating casket for land – 65

To forget sea and its unforgiving hardships:
On French soil again, albeit now alone in a strange new land,
For ever now to be their home and hearth and grave;
The girl and her parents were taken to the place where they settled;
And the Huguenot miller became a soldier
Indentured in the employ of Robert Giffard, Sieur de Beauport...
Yet, the girl was ever foremost in his dark thoughts;
And long brooding nights alone in the woods on sentry watch he'd lust,
Remembering cheery cheeks blush and pouty soft lips,
Gentle doe-eyes and looks which he swore were full of love – no love was lost.
He saw what he wanted and not the poor, scared child –
A fair fleur-de-lis which he imagined was his – and his alone. 70
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‘T was during this time the Iroquois with the white men didst wage war
Coming from o'er the sea on their floating islands,
Expanding their territory with e'ery horrible massacre –
More-and-more of the devils came to rape the land:
Both savage and white men alike killed each one the other.
Marauders roamed the night full of rapine and torture,
With flaming brand burned and pillaged and filled the land with bloody murder.
Both tomahawk and arquebuse sang the war song
And people died – some were tortured or eaten, others were made slaves...
Forced to live lives of disgrace amongst their enemies –
And many forgotten martyrs went alive to their early graves.
But, still, the illicit fur trade continued on
With men like the Coureurs des Bois Medard Chouart Des Groseilliers
And Pierre Esprit Chouart dit Radisson:
They made an unlicensed fur trading expedition to the north shore
Of the great Lake Superior, near Pigeon River,
And down into Michigan, bold amongst the Wendat they did venture
To persuade the native hunters and trappers there
To bring their winter pelts down to the forts on St-Lawrence River.
‘T was then they first heard stories of untouched beaver,
Around Hudson's Bay, the inland sea, north of Lake Superior. 80
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The French were all alone there in that strange and foreign savage land;
All alone... and far from any help troubled times;
And the French colonies were suffering in desperate straits and fear,
Due to constant attacks by wild Iroquois...
Despite Laval's excommunication decree against liquor,
An important trade item used by the traders
To traffic favours with the fathers for their wives and native girls...
And, of Wendat and Ottawa driven west
To escape certain slaughter at the hands of the warlike Iroquois.
Providence, too, manifest spirituality,
Morbidity orienting manifestations of martyrdom – 100
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Isaac Jogues, in particular, who underwent years of troubles
Before he finally met with his violent doom...
Thus, in defense of the immense dignity of the Indians
And to regulate the trade and the merchants,
Laval excommunicated all who sold liquor to savages.
In retaliation, traders at Tadoussac
Supported by the state, to freely traffic in "the water of life"
And trade in blood with the Indians for fur –
All the better to exploit them and their simple peoples decimate –
O those greedy men perpetuating years of hate
Tried hard to prevent Jesuit Father Gabriel Druillettes –
True initiator of the western missions –
And Jacque Fremin – amongst Onondagas, Cayugas, and Mohawks –
From visiting that wild and godless trading post.

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Frenchmen were killed by Iroquois – yet, still the liquor trade went on.
To traffic in *l'eau-de-vie* was thought not a crime,
And the canoes of the Attikameg and Piskatang would come
To trade – coming to the posts from inland places...
They all asked for some French to join them on their return journey home.

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Canoes from the Nation of Sault (Ojibwa), too,
Arrived, traveling inland routes, after five months of trapping and trade.
They, as well, requested Frenchmen join their return...
Laval, meanwhile, for the young Colony established a decree:
New France needed French children to prosper and grow,
So, intent on ensuring bondage of young people to the land
And, therefore, a chosen religion – Catholicism –
The order was for parents of New France to see their children wed;
Sons married by twenty and daughters by sixteen
Or appear before court every six months until they were married.
And many a virgin was promised in marriage
Child-Brides: Some children as young as ten or twelve to men were sold:
And mothered these great families with many babes –
Some of these girls bearing into this life more than twenty souls
An achievement without recognition or laurels...

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The Jesuits, too, sought Native girls for servants – calling them converts
But they were nothing but slaves to Christian dogma.
This fanatical Church Indenture Decree ensured the Jesuits
A religious and economic monopoly:
Making Indenture laws was perfectly clear for the Church fathers:
So to discourage free trade thinking 'mongst the people,
Merchants were not permitted to hold meetings nor trade foreign goods;
To secure a growing peasant population
Farmers were forbidden to move into towns, neither servants hire;
Licenses had to be obtained to keep order

Amongst an enslaved mass of peoples which were expected to pro-create...

Now, though, the lowly women mothered a nation

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Prohibitions on all books save of a devotional nature

Subjected that nation to religious bondage,

Thus, they, like caged birds, were raised quite contented their “free” stature

And the people by an illusion were so fooled...

And to all Roman Catholic ideologies they conformed.

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Governor d’Argenson with Bishop Laval publicly warred;

And with the Jesuits was vying for power:

The Iroquois had attacked the day that he landed on Québec’s shore,

Now he made an enemy of the Jesuits.

D’Argenson and Laval battled as to who had the higher place

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At social functions and who should be first incensed

At Holy Mass – to assert the supremacy of Church over State.

This religiously sponsored decree supported

By royal policy... only drove free-thinking men to escape

And live as Coureurs de Bois, running through the woods;

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Surviving off the land and breeding with the wild red savages

To give birth to the land’s Native Métis nation –

And a quarter of the effective population vanished into trees –

An exodus from towns so great there was concern

Métis descendants would begin outnumbering French-born citizens

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And the French would soon become a minority.

The Indenture Decree did much to encourage

A growing Voyagers and “Bois-Brûle” (Métis) population,

Both, in the villages around the trading posts

And in the wilderness away far from French civilization:

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Far from Holy Mother – Roman Catholic Church:

These fascist rules and regulations were directly traceable

To clerical influence – egotistical insistence

On importing European beliefs and ideals into the wilds:

But, in the wilderness the Voyager Frenchmen,

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Aligned their thoughts more closely with the Native spiritual beliefs

Many choose to live like Indians in the forest.

Daniel Vuil, too, was amongst the heathen trading bottled spirits

And with their savage women drunken carousing...

One night, this specter - with help of savage demons haunted Barbe,

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Tormenting the young woman he so long desired

During black nights alone within the woods... lusting for “his dove”:

That foul evening the dastard and his gang came...

They were drunk and drinking liquor and making with her quite bold;

“Give me the girl” Vuil demanded. “I have abjured

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My religion to win her – God damn and to hell with the devil!

Surrender her hand to me in lawful marriage.”

He took fair Barbe Halay up by her arm as if she was a ragdoll...
Confronted by the father – anger turned violent,
Jean-Baptiste Halay accused the would-be suitor and his demons
Of defaming his pure daughter's virgin virtue
With their unwelcome presence in his family's remote cabin;
Yet the devils were unmoved from the humble home.
Mathurine the loving mother held Barbe closer to her bosom,
"You'll never have this child, heathen; leave us alone." 200

Whence the invader spat a curse – and swore again he'd have her love.
Hence did Daniel Vuil take up the Holy Bible
And roughly cast it across the room before leaving – *Sacreblue* –
Returning to the night like a nightmare to dreams,
Leaving the poor girl sore with bruises – gone by the morning's light... 210

And disappeared they back into the dark forest
To lie about their doing this sad deed whence it was quick found out:
The vile act was to the seigneur reported
Shortly thereafter – her parents accusing him of employing maléfice
(Evil spells) to torment their daughter in their home – 215

Him having come in the night with his devils the child to possess.

Lalemant Jerome sought the devil everywhere...
But Vuil was the only wizard ever found in the colony,
Vuil was accused of witchcraft and sorcery
And he was straightway imprisoned in February 1660: 220

Whence the prisoner didst relapse into heresy –
The vile villain was called a witch and charged with employing sorcery
For he blasphemed profaning Holy Sacraments –
"The Huguenot heretic having caused the Holy Bible
To fly across the room – and did worship devils." 225

Bishop Laval took it upon him to investigate this crime,
The dossier he compiled contains revelatory
"Permission to inform against Daniel Vuril [sic], who, relapsed
Into heresy and abuses the sacrament."
In October 1661 this began a "great quarrel" 230

Between Governor d'Argenson and Bishop Laval
Over the latter's demand for the death sentence to be imposed
Against Vuil – "relapsed heretic, blasphemer
And profaner of the Sacraments" which by law were held most sacred.
Convinced of the Huguenot sorcerer's guilt in this matter, 235

Laval gladly pronounced a death sentence

To return from the pen of justice, Daniel Vuil could not fail:
The act of selling l'eau-de-vie (water spirits)
Was by no means a capital crime... and the defendant, Vuil,
Could not be made to suffer his death for this sin... 240
Shouldst Bishop win – hanging was the punishment of civilians;

Nine men had met their end hanging from the gallows
Since the Frenchmen first came to the New World to found colonies;
More than twenty years had passed since the last was hanged
Now, if the Governor so won – by L’arquebusade a man would die!
This is our proof that Daniel Vuil was a soldier –
A military death rather than a civil execution.
Thus Daniel Vuil was executed eight months later by shot.

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Taken from her father Jean-Baptiste and Mathurine Valet her mother
Poor Barbe Halay was deemed possessed by the devil
So, in 1661, she was given to good Sister Marie Catherine to cure.
She was a blessed flower blooming in New France:
Augustinian Hospitaller Sister of the Mercy of Jesus
Of the “Hotel Dieu: in Québec City:
And the devil in her Holy guise appeared
To scourge the devil out from an innocent girl – and make her pure:
Those devils raged against the holy religious appeared to her
And beat her terribly – for her Protestant thoughts.
Yet they only taught her to fear the love of God,
Instilling in her awful aversion to Holy Communion:
She was just a girl – abused for her purity;
Thus unjust God permitted she be cast into a dark prison
When she prayed for the sinners which had harmed her,
A cold, dead place where the devil-possessed were forced to live together,
Away from others, thereby they could do no evil

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Viul’s execution notwithstanding, Protestants continued
To arrive in Nouvelle France’s Québec colony:
And Vuil became the third Frenchman executed in the New World,
La Violette was shot with him for selling liquor
To the wild red savages – rather than implicate him in this crime.
For this adolescent girl’s violation
Both despicable men should be fore’er ne’er spoken of again.

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ENDNOTES

Barbe Halay daughter of Jean-Baptiste Halay and Mathurine Valet was born about 1645 at St-Julien-du-Coudray, Orléanais, Chartres, France – and she died in June 1696 at Lauzon, Lévis, Québec; being buried on 18 Jun 1696 in St-Joseph de La Pointe de Lévis, Québec.

Jean-Baptiste Halay was born about 1607 at St-Julien-du-Coudray, Orléanais, Chartres, France – and he was found dead in the woods in Lauzon, Chaudière-Appalaches; being buried on 19 March 1671/72 in the parish of Notre-Dame-de-Québec by Abbé Thomas Joseph Morel. Mathurine Valet was born in 1609 at St-Julien-du-Coudray, Chartres, France – and she died on 14 March 1685/85 at Lauzon, Lévis, Québec. Jean-Baptiste Halay and Mathurine

Valet were married in 1640 at Chartres, St-Julien, Beauce, France. They migrated from St-Julien du Coudray, Eure-et-Loir (Orléanais), France...

On 30 November 1657, Nicolas Maccard conceded land to Jean-Baptiste Halay at Longue-Pointe, L'Ange-Gardien, Montmorency, Québec. In 1667, Jean-Baptiste Halay and Mathurine Valet lived (with André Patris) at Lauzon, Chaudière-Appalaches, where he owned three head of cattle and twelve acres of cleared land.

Jean Carrière son of Jean Carrière and Jeanne Dodier was born about 1636/37 at St-George, Xainte, Indré, France – and he came to New France about 1660. In 1666, Jean Carrière was one of eight men living with the hospitalières (nuns) and several other women at Québec. On 27 July 1670, a marriage contract was signed by Jean Carrière and Barbe Halay before Notary Sieur Pierre Duquet Chenaye in the presence of witnesses... and they were married on 4 November 1670 at Québec.